

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SIL-01 LAB-04 /069 W

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P 122155Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6096

INFO ALL CONSULATES IN MEXICO BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 8888

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, MX

SUBJ: THE EXCELSIOR COUP: A SCHERER SUPPORTER'S VIEW WHY

REF: A. MEXICO 8783 B. MEXICO 8735

1. SUMMARY: A SCHERER GARCIA SUPPORTER SAYS SCHERER IS CONVINCED THAT PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA ORGANIZED HIS OUSTER. IN SUPPORTER'S OPINION, INTENT WAS TO REMOVE EXCELSIOR AS A POWERFUL OPPONENT OF ECHEVERRIA'S AMBITION TO RETAIN POLITICAL POWER AFTER HIS TERM ENDS. SUPPORTER SAW INEVITABLE STRUGGLE FOR POWER SHAPING UP. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF SPOKE JULY 10 WITH SUPPORTER OF SCHERER GARCIA WHO, WHILE NOT PRESENT AT THE JULY 8 COOPERATIVE MEETING, HAD ACCOUNTS FROM PERSONS WHO HAD BEEN PRESENT. HIS DESCRIPTION OF "HOW" THE OUSTER HAD BEEN ORGANIZED OFFERED THESE NEW DETAILS:

A) THE ORGANIZER OF THE PASEOS DE TASQUENA LAND INVATIONS, HUMBERTO SERRANO, HAD MET FREQUENTLY DURING JUNE WITH THE LEADER OF THE DISSIDENT MEMBERS OF EXCELSIO (JORGE DIAZ REDONDO), AND WITH "GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES";

B) DIAZ REDONDO, WHO AS HEAD OF EXCELSIOR ADMINISTRATIVE
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COUNCIL HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHECKING CREDENTIALS OF

COOPERATIVE MEMBERS, BROUGHT IN DOZENS OF ARMED "PORRAS" (THUGS), WHO SUCCESSFULLY INTIMIDATED THE LARGELY APOLITICAL COOPERATIVE MEMBERS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE FAVORED SCHERER AND HIS ASSOCIATES;

C) WHEN SCHERER SAW ARMED THUGS, HE HAD MADE UNSUCCESSFUL LAST DITCH EFFORT TO GET POLICE SURVEILLANCE FROM MEXICO CITY POLICE CHIEF, WHO REFUSED TO ACCEPT HIS CALLES, AND HAD TRIED TO GET THROUGH TO PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA, WHOSE PRIVATE SECRETARY REFUSED TO PUT HIM IN TOUCH WITH THE PRESIDENT. THESE TWO EFFORTS CONFIRMED IN SCHERER'S MIND SUSPICIONS THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS BACKING THE OUSTER; AND

D) A CLOSE ALLY OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA, SENATOR ENRIQUE GONZALEZ PEDRERO, WAS RECRUITING RESPECTABLE JOURNALISTS AND ACADEMICIANS TO FILL THE VOID LEFT BY THE DEPARTURE OF SOME FORTY EIGHT SCHERER SUPPORTERS.

2. WHY ECHEVERRIA WANTED SCHERER OUT: SOURCE, A POLITICAL SCIENTISTS SPECIALIZING IN INTERNAL MEXICAN POLITICS, OFFERED THE FOLLOWING PERSONAL OPINION AS TO WHY THE PRESIDENT WANTED SCHERER OUT. HE SAID OTHERS WHO HAD SUPPORTED SCHERER HELD SIMILAR VIEWS. IRRITATION OVER EXCELSIOR'S INDEPENDENCE, IN SOURCE'S OPINION, WAS DEFINITELY NOT INVOLVED. ON THE CONTRARY, EXCELSIOR HAD IN A SENSE "LEGITIMIZED" THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION BY HIS FREQUENT CRITICISMS OF VARIOUS GOVERNMENT POLICIES. DESPITE THE PAPER'S INDEPENDENCE, EXCELSIOR'S LEADERSHIP HAD, ON THE WHOLE, BEEN GENUINELY SUPPORTIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT. SOURCE BRUSHED ASIDE AS "NONSENSE" IDEA THAT CRITICISM OF JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO BY EXCELSIOR COLUMNIST GASTON GARCIA CANTU OR OTHER SUCH CRITICISM MIGHT HAVE PROVOKED THE HOSTILITY. "IF EXCELSIOR HAD NOT EXISTED", SOURCE CONCLUDED ON THIS POINT, "ECHEVERRIA WOULD HAVE HAD TO HAVE INVENTED IT" TO MAKE HIS "POLITICAL OPENING" CREDIBLE.

3. SOURCE SAID HE THOUGHT OUSTER HAD TO DO WITH THE PRESIDENT'S DESIRE TO RETAIN POLITICAL CONTROL AFTER HE LEFT OFFICE.

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J. THIS WAS NOTHING NEW, HE SAID -- PRACTICALLY EVERY PRESIDENT HAD ATTEMPTED IT, AND CALLES, CARDENAS, AND RUIZ CONTRINES HAD HAD SOME SUCCESS. EVERYTHING THE PRESIDENT WAS DOING, PARTICULARLY HIS IMPOSITION OF LOPEZ PORTILLO (POLITICALLY WEAK) AS HIS SUCCESSOR AND HIS SUBSEQUENTLY

NAMING HIS CLOSEST COLLABORATORS TO KEY PRI POSITIONS, POINTED IN THIS DIRECTION. HE THOUGHT A STRUGGLE

FOR POWER WAS INEVITABLY COMING. ECHEVERRIA WOULD HAVE PRACTICALLY ALL THE LEGISLATURE, AT LEAST "THREE OR FOUR" KEY CABINET OFFICERS, MUCH OF THE PRI, AND A STRONG Foothold IN THE PRESS TO FURTHER HIS AMBITIONS. HE SAID IT WAS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT THE PRESIDENT NOW HAD A CONTROLLING INTEREST IN TWO MEXICO CITY DAILIES -- EL SOL (ALONG WITH THIRTY TWO PROVINCIAL PAPERS) AND EL UNIVERSAL. IT WAS ALSO RUMORED (SOURCE WAS LESS CERTAIN OF THIS) THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD JUST IN THE LAST WEEK OBTAINED AN INTEREST IN EITHER MEXICO CITY TV CHANNEL 4 OR 5. ALTHOUGH A SCHERER GARCIA-LED EXCELSIOR WOULD HAVE BEEN INDEPENDENT OF AND OCCASIONALLY CRITICAL OF A LOPEZ PORTILLO ADMINISTRATION, EXCELSIO IN EFFECT WOULD HAVE BEEN A POWERFUL SUPPORTER OF LOPEZ PORTILLO BEING HIS OWN MAN AS PRESIDENT, AND WOULD HAVE STRONGLY OPPOSED EFFORTS OF ECHEVERRIA (OR ANY EX-PRESIDENT) TO RETAIN POLITICAL POWER AND INFLUENCE. THUS THE OUSTER OF SCHERER WAS NOT MERELY TO REMOVE A BUSINESS COMPETITOR; IT WAS DESIGNED, IN SOURCE'S OPINION, TO REMOVE A POWERFUL OPPONENT OF ECHEVERRIA'S POLITICAL AMBITIONS.

4. ASKED IF IT WERE NOT POSSIBLE THAT JLP WELCOMED THE CHANGE SINCE IT HAD BEEN EXCELSIOR WHICH IN FEBRUARY 1975 HAD SUPPOSEDLY "BURNED" JLP'S PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS, SOURCE SAID HE KNEW THAT AMENDS FOR THAT INCIDENT HAD LONG SINCE BEEN MADE. SOURCE COMMENTED THAT, WITH SCHERER OUSTED AND A MORE AMENABLE (TO ECHEVERRIA) LEADERSHIP INSTALLED, THERE REMAINED ONLY THE CONSERVATIVE EL HERALDO AS A MAJOR INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER IN MEXICO CITY.

5. COMMENT: SOURCE'S OPINION THAT A SCHERER-LED EXCELSIOR WOULD OPPOSE ANY EFFORT TO RETAIN POLITICAL POWER BY AN EX-PRESIDENT, EVEN ONE WHOSE POLICIES IT HAD LARGELY ENDORSED, IS SUPPORTED BY EXCELSIOR EDITORIAL OF LAST OCTOBER 20. EDITORIAL PRAISED
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ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ECHEVERRIA AND SAID HE MIGHT WELL DEDICATE HIS TALENTS TO "WELL DELIMITED TASKS IN THE PUBLIC REALM...BUT THE POLITICAL AND JURIDICAL POWERS OF THE PRESIDENCY MUST BE TRANSMITTED IN ITS ENTIRETY (ON INAUGURATION DAY) TO JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO... THE HEALTH OF REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS CALLS FOR IT". (SEE 1975 MEXICO 9226.)

6. EMBASSY HAS NOT YET DISCUSSED EXCELSIOR INCIDENT WITH ANYONE CLOSE TO LOPEZ PORTILLO. WHETHER OR NOT THEY SEE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN SIMILAR LIGHT SHOULD PROVIDE FURTHER INSIGHT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REMOVAL FROM OFFICE, THE PRESS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MEXICO08888
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760268-0553
From: MEXICO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760768/aaaachyp.tel
Line Count: 167
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MEXICO 8783, 76 MEXICO 8735
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUL 2004 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <29 OCT 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE EXCELSIOR COUP: A SCHERER SUPPORTER'S VIEW WHY
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SOPN, MX, EXCELSIOR, (ECHEVERRIA ALVAREZ, LUIS), (SCHERER GARCIA, JULIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006